

Maria Williams
Comments for UA BOR Emergency meeting
10/7/19

Dear UA BOR:

Thank you for hearing my words today, which reflect the sentiments of most faculty across the three universities. It is regrettable that I must acknowledge that we have a crisis of leadership in the SW office, which has resulted in confusion and chaotic decision making.

I must point out that Faculty Alliance has written a number of resolutions - the most recent one from our emergency meeting (Resolution 2020-06) last week, which asks for:

- 1) An immediate moratorium on the expedited program reviews being conducted under Academic Restructuring Phase 2 until the UA administration follows the NWCCU and US Department of Education guidelines to insure inclusive decision making;**
- 2) That a task force be formed immediately, led by the three Chancellors, their provosts, and shared governance leadership in order to get the report to the NWCCU in advance of their 10/31/19 deadline, in addition to identifying all specific BOR policies and regulations that need to be amended in order to come into compliance with NWCCU standards;**
- 3) That the commercials, media, and the New UA system Website be frozen as it presents uninformed and erroneous information.**

It has been a tumultuous few months and the faculty acknowledge that we have dealt with severe budget scenarios that have included up to a \$135 million dollar cut, multiple emergency meetings, declaration of financial exigency,

a new compact between the Governor and Chair Davies,
reversal financial exigency,
the 'New UA Academic Structure Change Management Working Groups' a week-long process led by an outside consultant,
a questionable survey by the consultant, and now
expedited academic program reviews under VP Layer with a deadline of October 10th. So, imagine - you might be a faculty or professional staff or student in the UAF College of Business - and you are in an academic restructuring committee with your UAA College of business counterparts - and only one of these colleges might survive - and guess what - you have to do this in an expedited fashion, over a total of 6 hours, with reports due by 10/10. This is not shared governance.

All of the above actions culminated in a shocking letter from the NWC UU, which states that accreditation of our universities are at risk if shared governance is not implemented.

Throughout all of these initiatives, the faculty voice has been muted. In addition the leadership of our Chancellors has been compromised by unilateral decisions being made from the SW President's office. Concern over a clear lack of shared governance are expressed in the recent Staff Alliance resolution (2019-01) regarding administrative consolidations, which states that staff have been left out of the decision-making process, the UAA Faculty Senate resolution (100-419-2) calling into question the leadership abilities of our current president, and an unprecedented letter written by seven former Chancellors demanding that the UA system reverse course and adopt shared governance strategies in decisions on restructure. The USUAF (SR 193-001) resolution which supports the Faculty Alliance resolution cited earlier, and the UAS Faculty Senate resolution (--2019-1--) echo the sentiments of the UAA Faculty Senate, questioning President Johnsen's leadership and the current lack of inclusiveness.

The faculty acknowledge that the State of Alaska is in a budget downturn, and we are willing to restructure and re-vision our respective universities. There have been hundreds of faculty who have done research, crunched budget figures and served on committees - which is evidence that we are willing to do some heavy lifting and roll up our sleeves. However, it must be within the context of a process in which we work directly with our Chancellors and our shared governance groups.

May I capture two processes that have played out these past few months. The first is an example of inclusive governance and collaboration and the second is a counter example. -

Process 1

In late July, Faculty Alliance sent a memo to all the Chancellors and Provosts asking that they include their faculty senate leadership in any planning and discussions regarding how they would survive with the \$135 million dollar budget cut. It was almost magical - the three Chancellors, their respective provosts, budget teams, faculty senate leadership and a few staff set up zoom meetings in advance of the 7/30/19 BOR meeting. This was a true shared governance process - all voices at the table - dealing with real budget figures - everyone having the opportunity to propose creative solutions and develop strategies to share expenses across the three universities. I saw all three of our Chancellors making hard decisions in a transparent fashion and listening to their stakeholders. This was an inclusive process - one that the NWCCU cites as necessary as the UA system moves forward. These discussions led to a proposal to the BOR that maintained separate accreditation, with shared services and a focus on students.

Process 2

President Johnsen proposed the 'New UA', a single accredited model in which we would have only one college of Engineering, one College of Business, and one college of Liberal Arts/Arts and Sciences, eliminating faculty positions and

upending curriculum, with no focus on how this would impact our students. We saw PowerPoint slides indicating that under this new UA, the faculty of consolidated programs would get their pink slips this December, with employment ending in one year, and that our administrators (our trusted Chancellors, Provosts and Deans) would get theirs in November - to have their employment end in February 2020. Anyone that has any sense of management would not support this process. While the first example under the Chancellors' direction resulted in a sense of inclusion and collaboration, this current process has resulted in fear, frustration, lack of trust, and low morale.

Solutions: Faculty, staff and students have been discussing ways to move forward. However, we must correct the issues pointed out by the NWCCU by the October 31 deadline.

In addition to lack of shared governance, the NWCCU indicated concern over Standard 2.A.2, which requires that In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated, but we must be equally aware of NWCCU Standards 2.A.7 and 2.A.10, which require that each separately-accredited institution have its own full-time CEO, with true authority for running their institution and who reports directly to the Board. This is a reference to the chancellors, not the System President.

The Chancellors need to be considered by the BOR as co-equal executives, each of whom is endowed with authority to act in the interests of the entity for which they're responsible and to report directly to the Board of Regents. *This change alone will address much of what the NWCCU indicated as problematic in its 9/26/2019 letter.* Furthermore, the NWCCU requested in its letter that the response come from the institutions, either jointly or separately, i.e. from the chancellors. The Board can show compliance with the NWCCU standards by empowering the chancellors to work directly with them, without the System

President acting as an information filter. These actions should be authorized immediately.

In conclusion, the path forward should include the following, which is based on inclusive decision making using shared governance principles:

- **The Chancellors should be the ones to submit academic program changes and curricular proposals directly to Board of Regents as they are the CEO's of their respective universities and in accordance with UA policy (SW is NOT an accredited body);**
- **Establish an ad hoc committee that is led by the three Chancellors, with staff, faculty and student governance members, which will create a response to the NWCCU letter, identifying areas in which UABOR policies are out of compliance with NWCCU and the US Department of Education;**
- **Development functions, i.e. public relations, alumni relations and fundraising, etc. must remain within their respective Universities - these should not be consolidated;**
 - **alternative restructuring must include a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of each alternative and be carried out by committees that adhere to the principles of shared governance with adequate time to carefully consider all options;**
 - **Foundational criteria for evaluating these plans should be student access and excellence in teaching, research, and public service;**
 - **Plans originating from academic programs expressing mutual desire for restructuring should be encouraged, incentivized and supported;**